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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 36th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PIRIZ-BALLON (Uruguay)

later: Mr. GUERRERO (Philippines)
(Vice-Chairman)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)
(A/47/3, A/47/82-S/23512, A/47/83, A/47/132, A/47/212-E/1992/54, A/47/222-E/1992/57 and Corr.1, A/47/225-S/23998, A/47/267, A/47/278-E/1992/77, A/47/283-E/1992/83, A/47/289-E/1992/68, A/47/294-E/1992/84, A/47/338, A/47/375-S/24429, A/47/403, A/47/407, A/47/408, A/47/411, A/47/445, A/47/446, A/47/499, A/47/627; A/C.2/47/L.2, A/C.2/47/L.5)

General debate (continued)

1. Mr. SZEDLACSKO (Hungary) welcomed the steps taken to streamlining the work of the Economic and Social Council and said that the high-level meeting held within the framework of the new substantive session on the theme "Enhancing international cooperation for development: the role of the United Nations system" had been a success. It was clear, however, that the new format could still be improved, particularly as regards coordination. Careful selection of high-priority topics and a tighter focus were essential.

2. The reforms under way in many parts of the world could be seriously threatened if the processes of restructuring and liberalization were denied the encouragement of a strengthened, well-functioning multilateral trading system. All countries had an interest in increasing the efficiency of the system of international trade under GATT rules, widening its scope, establishing equal rules for all and maintaining a smooth flow of international trade. For Hungary, foreign economic relations were crucial to the process of development and to the satisfactory completion of the transition to a market economy.

3. In that context, he acknowledged with satisfaction the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Impact of the evolution of East-West relations on global growth and development" (A/47/403), which contained numerous examples illustrating the fact that the complex issue of transition to a market economy could not be treated exclusively in the narrow context of its impact on a certain group of countries; the national characteristics of countries trying to cope with the problems of transition had to be taken into account. According to paragraph 7 of the report, the events in the East had not so far had any substantial negative impact for most developing countries, and there was little evidence of any sizeable diversion towards the transition economies of official development assistance previously earmarked for developing countries.

4. The phenomena of transition to market economy, including reintegration in world economy as well as reconstruction, deserved attention and detailed analysis by the United Nations. Although the burden of reform had to be carried by the countries in transition themselves, the existence of a helpful external environment remained one of the essential conditions for the successful completion of the process.

(Mr. Szedlacsko, Hungary)

5. Hungary wished to reiterate the importance it attached to the International Conference on Population and Development to be held in Cairo in 1994. His Government had recently set up a national committee to work on the project and was ready to take an active part in the preparation of the Conference at the international level.

6. His delegation shared the concerns of those who believed that the AIDS pandemic was far from being under control and that fighting the disease continued to be a priority issue.

7. Mr. YENEL (Turkey), referring to the International Conference on Population and Development, welcomed the statement by the Executive Director of UNFPA which clearly showed that preparations for the Conference were progressing in a most satisfactory manner. Turkey was setting up a national preparatory committee on which many governmental and non-governmental organizations would be represented.

8. Population was no longer being treated as a purely demographic issue. The fact that it was closely related to many other policy issues was now recognized. High rates of population growth were increasingly viewed as an obstacle to social and economic growth and associated with poverty and environmental degradation. Economic and social policies had to be developed in an integrated manner. Progress in the economic and social fields helped to slow population growth in the developing countries. In encouraging family planning activities, cultural and socio-economic considerations had to be taken into account. Women had a decisive role to play in efforts to create awareness. Turkey had strengthened its mother and child care and family planning services in rural areas and had expanded its information and education programmes as a priority item under its development policies.

9. Excessive urbanization was creating serious problems and creating new demands on health and education services and housing and infrastructure facilities which the public authorities could no longer satisfy. Policies had to be devised to reverse the process.

10. Migration from rural areas to cities and from poorer countries to richer ones was a problem of economic development for which lasting solutions had to be found and which had to be viewed in the broader context of education and mobilization of resources.

11. It was to be hoped that the Conference would address those issues in a pragmatic manner and would offer realistic solutions for their alleviation.

12. Mr. KHANI (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council was an essential process. In continuing the efforts being made in that area, advantage should be taken of the improved international climate.

(Mr. Khani, Syrian Arab Republic)

13. The General Assembly had repeatedly reaffirmed the sovereignty of the Palestinian population of the occupied Arab territories including Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan over its natural resources and condemned all the measures and practices applied by Israel with the aim of exploiting those resources for its own benefit. In the report of the Secretary-General (A/47/294-E/1992/84), those practices, and especially those of confiscating lands and of monopolizing the water resources of the population of the occupied territories, were condemned once again. The Israeli authorities had imposed tight restrictions on water use by the Arab inhabitants of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Syrian Golan in order to supply the Zionist settlements and had diverted the waters of several watercourses, including the Litani river in Lebanon, thus reducing the area of cultivated lands and causing the depopulation of those regions, particularly on the Arab side of the Golan.

14. Israel was also continuing its policy of confiscating lands and destroying fruit trees by spraying toxic chemicals, practices which were changing the climate as well as the nature of the lands and thus constituted a flagrant violation of several United Nations resolutions. Those practices, aimed at driving the inhabitants from their villages and homes in the occupied territories, had been intensified in spite of the peace negotiations in progress. They had contributed towards the deterioration of the Palestinians' living conditions and were contrary to the provisions of international instruments on international humanitarian law and on human rights. The Arab citizens of the occupied territories not only had a right to their own natural resources but should also be compensated for the damage they had suffered.

15. Mr. SINGH (India) said that, in the context of efforts made to streamline the work of the Economic and Social Council and to improve the complementarity of its work with that of the General Assembly, his delegation had proposed that the debate in the main committees of the Council should be curtailed because debates in the General Assembly duplicated the discussions in those two sessional bodies. The segment approach to the substantive session of the Council adopted pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 45/264 and 46/235, and in particular the debate during the high-level segment, had made the deliberations more businesslike and action-oriented. All reforms in the economic and social field should be oriented towards improving the delivery capacity of the United Nations through a deeper understanding of the complex process of economic and social development. The success of the reforms in progress would be judged on the basis of the achievement of that objective. The discussions during the high-level segment and the position papers of the Group of 77 would provide the basis for further deliberations in the Second Committee. In judging any reform proposal, his delegation would apply the yardstick of the principles of the Charter and those elaborated in the position papers.

(Mr. Singh, India)

16. Coordination of activities within the United Nations system was one of the Council's principal functions and the progress that had been made in that regard was heartening. The forthcoming establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development would necessitate enhanced consideration of the coordination of systemwide activity related to the follow-up of Agenda 21; that would be an added responsibility for the Council.

17. In the area of operational activities for development, the General Assembly would be making several recommendations in the context of reform and the triennial review of those activities. His delegation attached great importance to those efforts aimed at improving the effectiveness of operational activities; such activities should be provided with an assured and stable resource base.

18. In 1992, three subsidiary bodies of the Council had been established, namely, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development, and the Committee on Natural Resources. General Assembly resolution 46/235, which established those bodies, had also set out their functions and mandates. The independence and integrity of those bodies must be preserved.

19. The relationship between population and development, including the environmental dimension, was the most pressing issue for several developing countries. Curbing population growth was the Indian Government's top priority, whence the importance of the International Conference on Population and Development, to be held in Cairo in 1994. The Conference would not only increase global awareness of the linkages between population and development but would also lead to the formulation of an agenda for action to guide international cooperation in that area. His country welcomed the way in which the preparations for the Conference were proceeding. The activities undertaken at the national and regional levels would provide crucial inputs.

20. The AIDS pandemic was being felt the world over. The World Health Organization had estimated that by the year 2000, 30 to 40 million men, women and children would have been infected with HIV; that meant that, in eight years, the number of infected persons would have quadrupled. About 250,000 people were expected to die of the disease by the turn of the century - that was a frightening prospect. Apart from the human misery and suffering it caused, the pandemic was burdening development efforts and the provision of basic services to the population in general. The evolution of the global strategy to combat AIDS and the need to coordinate systemwide efforts had been discussed at the Council's June session. The only way the consequences of AIDS could be mitigated was through national efforts, research, expecially the sharing of information, and a significant stepping up of international efforts. The complexity of the issue necessitated a carefully coordinated effort involving health workers, researchers, development experts, NGOs and other institutions.

21. Mr. ROBINSON (United States of America) said that the Economic and Social Council's substantive session of 1992 had been a milestone event in the reform sweeping through the United Nations system. At that session, the Council had implemented changes mandated by General Assembly resolution 45/264. The number of resolutions had been significantly reduced, the duration of the session had been shortened, and the quality of discussion had been enhanced because of its greater pertinence. Since delegations had felt less obligated to produce resolutions, and they had been less tempted to take a hard-line stand for negotiating purposes. There would be little point in attempting to draft resolutions in the absence of meaningful discussion to identify problems and possible solutions. By serving as a forum for candid discussion, the Council had helped prepare for the current session of the General Assembly.

22. The policy dialogue with multilateral institutions had been notable for the active participation of the highest authorities of the World Bank, IMF, GATT and UNCTAD. The Council's prestige as a useful forum for responsible deliberation had been enhanced. The coordination segment would be more productive in future years as the Council focused on the actual efforts of the United Nations agencies to coordinate their activities on a given issue.

23. His delegation was pleased to see the changes in the Council's sessions. Thanks to the reforms that had been introduced, the Council would gradually take on a distinct role in the United Nations system, providing a forum for serious discussion on economic and social matters and coordination of operational activities.

24. Prosperity was essential for world peace; prosperity depended on a growth-oriented international economic order, an order in which the private sector served as the engine for the expansion of developing and emerging economies. During the high-level segment of the Council's session Member States had discussed the role of the United Nations system in enhancing international cooperation for development. That meant that new emphasis should be placed on building economic partnerships among the private sectors of the different countries. The Council had endorsed a resolution on privatization which had been the product of consensus in the Commission on Transnational Corporations. Throughout the world, thousands of state-owned enterprises were being transformed into joint stock companies. By continuing to forge global consensus on that important phenomenon, the Council had sought to assist developing and emerging countries to achieve economic transition based on policies aimed at increasing economic efficiency, growth and sustainable development through privatization, the elimination of monopolies and deregulation of economic activities.

25. Member States had the responsibility to foster and support the free market reforms necessary to accelerate growth and strengthen democracy in the developing world and in the new democratic States. That should be done by promoting the private sector in those countries. The more a country relied on the private sector and on free and open markets, and the better its investment climate, the higher its rate of growth.

(Mr. Robinson, United States)

26. To continue developing entrepreneurship in all countries, the United Nations system must continually improve its activities for promoting free markets. The International Chamber of Commerce and the United Nations Development Programme had recently signed an agreement to cooperate in strengthening the relationship between entrepreneurs and chambers of commerce in developing countries and in emerging economies. As the President of the World Bank had stated in the Economic and Social Council, the key to growth was structural reform aimed at the creation of a viable private sector. The first step was to encourage small businesses, the second was to restructure or privatize large State enterprises. That was the way to open up the productive potential of key economic sectors, leading to growth and development.

27. In conclusion, he expressed the hope, as had the Secretary-General, that the Economic and Social Council would become as important as the Security Council, and become the "Council of the twenty-first century". Security, economic, social and humanitarian questions must be dealt with by the United Nations in a coordinated fashion across a broad spectrum.

28. Mr. Guerrero (Philippines), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

29. Mr. BABA (Uganda) said that AIDS was a threat to the survival of mankind, spreading to areas which until present had been relatively untouched at a speed greater than during the initial phase. In Asia, and particularly in India, Thailand and Myanmar, the situation was alarming. It was estimated that by the year 2000 Asia could be the world's most severely affected area. Countries of Latin America, especially Brazil and Mexico, were seriously concerned about the incidence of the disease in their region. The desperate situation of the populations of Sub-Saharan Africa and other regions of the world in face of the pandemic was already well documented. It was projected that 3.8 million people - more than the total number of cases registered over the past 10 years - would develop AIDS by 1995. Total global funding for HIV/AIDS activities during the period 1986-1992 was estimated at US$ 864 million, yet according to WHO calculations US$ 965 million had been required to finance national prevention activities in the year 1990 alone. The amounts earmarked for prevention and care in the developing countries, where almost 80 per cent of people infected by the virus lived, remained very small. In view of that situation it was legitimate to ask whether the strategy adopted so far should not be reviewed. He wished to emphasize, however, that the input by United Nations agencies and donor organizations in the fight against the disease had been impressive. The preventive measures applied in the context of the WHO Global Programme on AIDS (mass media campaigns and community-based programmes designed to bring about behaviour change, distribution of condoms to female sex-workers, counselling, sterilization of injecting equipment and screening blood before transfusion) were known to have been effective.

(Mr. Baba, Uganda)

30. Prevention by education had been the focus of activities in the fight against AIDS up to the present, but it was now necessary to move beyond that area and explore other possibilities of achieving better results, such as developing care facilities and psychological support for HIV-infected people, ensuring the availability of common drugs required for treatment of opportunistic infections, scientific research, social-behavioural and biomedical research and research on HIV-2 occurrence, which was prevalent in some parts of Africa.

31. Knowledge of how to prevent the transmission of AIDS was now widespread but it was of little use if women, in particular, were not empowered to protect themselves. That was largely a matter of improving their social and economic status. In Sub-Saharan Africa, it was the women who were bearing the burden of care, increasing infection rates and growing pre-natal transmission, as well as bearing the social and economic weight of the disease. But women also had the greatest potential, if empowered to do so, to play a major role in bringing the pandemic under control. The strategy on AIDS should therefore be aimed above all at women and other vulnerable groups in the field.

32. Donor agencies had been at the forefront of the struggle against AIDS by providing resources through the WHO Programme or through bilateral aid. However, because of the chronic shortage of resources it was essential to improve donor coordination at the country level so as to avoid duplication of programmes and promote exchange of experience.

33. The leadership role of WHO in placing AIDS programmes on the agenda of many Governments of developing countries and the effectiveness of its Global Programme were unquestioned. However, AIDS in developing countries should also be addressed within the context of development issues and should be related to problems such as poverty, the position of women and children, education and the improvement of the health care system. In that regard, the alliance between WHO and UNDP should be strengthened and a multisectoral approach should be promoted. There were countries with resources and power to save lives from the terrible pandemic that was threatening mankind; their urgent response was called for. Individual and collective efforts were needed more than ever before.

AGENDA ITEM 83: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued)

Draft resolution A/C.2/47/L.21

34. Mr. CLAVIJO (Colombia), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/47/L.21 entitled "Triennial policy review of the operational activities of the United Nations development system" on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the draft resolution, which was the result of intensive negotiations, respected the spirit of General Assembly resolution 44/211, which it reiterated in more precise and more concise terms.

(Mr. Clavijo, Colombia)

35. A subparagraph which appeared in the text he was introducing had been omitted in error from the document distributed to members of the Committee. Presenting in detail the operational part of the draft, which was divided into six sections, he drew attention to paragraphs 4 to 7 of the section on national execution and paragraphs 9 to 14 of the section on programme approach. Paragraph 10 was designed to ensure a suitable distribution of tasks between the three entities referred to as well as between the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. In paragraph 14, the country strategy note referred to was optional in nature, which explained the use of the term "interested recipient Governments". He then stressed the need for increased decentralization of activities, especially in connection with procurement of expertise and equipment. With regard to the following section, he explained that the provisions of paragraph 21, and especially of its subparagraphs (a) and (b), presupposed the existence of far-reaching consensus on the need to strengthen the role of the Resident Coordinator. In the section on reporting, auditing and evaluation, he drew attention to paragraphs 22, 24 and 26, explaining that the provisions of paragraph 24, which implied that the objectives of the first three sections of the draft could only be achieved through strengthening the recipient Governments' auditing capacity and accounting systems, were based on General Assembly resolution 44/211. In the final section on training, he drew attention to paragraph 27 and in connection with national capacities, stressed the need to take into account the particular problems of each country while not overlooking the regional level. He also drew attention to the four last paragraphs, stating that the final paragraph was perhaps the most important one of the draft as a whole.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.